

only sightings were in October. On two occasions, we saw a male in eclipse plumage frequenting a display site of 1987.

1994: The first signs were the presence of feathers towards the end of February. There were three sightings (sex uncertain) in March and April. On 25th April, two cocks were sighted. On our return in May after two weeks' absence, nine florican males in partial breeding plumage were seen in different parts of Enclosure-I. Four of these sites were territories held during 1987, and/or 1992 and 1993. At this time, a hen was also sighted. These birds were present till mid-June, by which time they attained their breeding plumage, and disappeared.

CONCLUSION

Rollapadu appears to be a regular wintering ground of the lesser florican. The birds may also breed at RWS if rains fail in their breeding grounds in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, as suggested by Sankaran and Manakadan (1990). Incidentally, the numbers of demoiselle cranes *Anthropoides virgo* and barheaded geese *Anser indicus* wintering in the Rollapadu area each year was found to be influenced by the quantum of rains in Gujarat.

It was observed during our two study periods that during years when rainfall was low in Gujarat, as many as 10,000 cranes and about 500 geese arrive (e.g. in 1992), but if the rains are good in Gujarat, then very low numbers arrive, or the birds may not arrive at all, as in 1994.

A few sites within the enclosure were frequented and defended by cock floricans year after year, which may serve either as their breeding or wintering territories. Attainment of full breeding plumage by males prior to their migration (presumably to their breeding grounds in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh) was observed during this study. In 1994, a population of not less than 10 birds (9 cocks and 1 hen) was recorded, which is the maximum number counted during both the studies. Lastly, since the observations showed that the florican is partial to tall grass cover, and uses the area during winter and summer, burning of the grass (whether due to accident, vandalism or as a management tool) would be detrimental for the lesser florican.

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9. THE OCCURRENCE OF COLLARED PRATINCOLE OR SWALLOW PLOVER *GLAREOLA PRATINCOLA* (LINN.) IN KUTCH

We are concerned with two races of the collared pratincole in the Subcontinent: the partly resident and mainly migratory nominate race, and *Glareola pratincola maldivarum*. This note

concerns the former, which breeds sparingly in Pakistan and straggles into India and even to Sri Lanka. According to Roberts (1991) it is a common, summer-breeding visitor in lower Sind

along the border of the Great Raan of Kutch, particularly in Badin dist. Dharmakumarsinhji (THE BIRDS OF SAURASHTRA) considered it to be rare in Saurashtra, with no breeding record there. Stuart Baker (1929) includes Kutch in its range of distribution and mentions its breeding along with *G. p. maldivarum* in Sind and Kutch. So far as I know there has been no record of this latter race in Kutch. It may also be mentioned here that in any case its pattern of distribution is unclear. There is only one breeding record of this race in Sind in the 19th century (Doig, 1879). Apart from this, there seems to be no firm recent record of its breeding in Pakistan.

There is no scope for taxonomic discussion in a note of this nature, but it might be mentioned that Charles Vaurie (1965) considers the collared pratincole a separate species, and perhaps some others do too. This has also been commented upon by Dr. T.J. Roberts.

The purpose of this note is to report the occurrence of the nominate race of the collared pratincole in Kutch. In the year 1992, there was heavy rainfall during the rainy season. Many of the low lying areas of Banni grassland were inundated with shallow water and some of the marshy areas did not dry up till the month of October. In such years the Bhuj-Pachham road beyond Loria village and c. 5 km short of Bhirandiara there is water interspersed with patches of dry and marshy ground which from July-August onwards becomes, to use Dr. Sálím Ali's expression, a veritable index on both sides of the road for the incoming waders, etc. and a few passerine birds also. It is a unique sight to

see terns sitting side by side on the telephone and electric wires with larks and bluecheeked bee-eaters!

On October 18, 1992 while standing on the edge of the embankment of the road, watching birds along with Shantilal Varu and other members of the Pelican Nature Club of Kutch, I espied a largish swallow-like bird flying in and settling down on the short vegetation-covered marshy flat ground. After seeing it through binoculars and properly studying its plumage and so on, we made sure that it was *Glareola p. pratincola*. Soon after this, we noticed a juvenile of the same species sitting nearby. It was smaller in size, darkish brown and there was no suggestion of lighter shades or white in its plumage except the breast, which appeared to have brownish and lighter shaded (buff) mottling. Judging from its size and coloration, one is inclined not to rule out the possibility of this pratincole having bred on this side of the border, and the conditions prevailing in the Banni that year were ideal for the nidification of the species.

Considering the foregoing facts, sighting a collared pratincole in Kutch is by no means impossible, but it is certainly a first record for this century. For neither Hugh Palin nor Capt. Lester listed this species and Dr. Sálím Ali did not meet with it during his initial survey and subsequent visits to Kutch.

December 1, 1997

M.K. HIMMATSINHJI

Jubilee Ground

Bhuj, Kutch, Pin 370 001.

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